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RHMFIUU/COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2767
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 003761

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SCA/FO (DAS GASTRIGHT), SCA/A, S/CRS,
SCA/PAB, S/CT, EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN
OSD FOR BREZINSKI
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD
REL NATO/AU/NZ/ISAF

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SUBJECT: TRIBAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY STILL MATTERS TO
SOME

REF: (A) KABUL 966 (B) 05 KABUL 5066

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1.(SBU) SUMMARY: Minister of Tribal Affairs
Mohammad Kareem Brahawi told POLCouns Simmons in an
August 12 meeting that tribal issues and tribal
identification still matter to a number of Afghans.
He also supported the importance of his Ministry in
modern Afghanistan in communicating with tribal
leaders in the provinces and passing their messages
to Kabul, as well as supporting those leaders with
lodging when in Kabul. As always, Brahawi spoke
about the need for tribal militias in supplying
security, with the self-serving goal of putting said
militias under his Ministry's authority, but
acknowledged his ministry had no resources to
support initiatives. END SUMMARY.

2.(U) Minister of Tribal Affairs Mohammad Kareem
Brahawi discussed the history and importance of his
Ministry with POLCouns Simmons in an August 12
meeting. Brahawi said his Ministry played a key
role in solving tribal problems and maintaining safe
borders throughout Afghan history. In the past the
Ministry supported tribal militias in key border
regions. Today, the Ministry supports the meetings
of tribal jirgas (councils) in the provinces
s
(including funding for hotel and guesthouse stays)
where local representatives pass all key info from
these meetings to the Ministry in Kabul, and runs
guest houses in Kabul for tribal leaders coming to
petition the government to address grievances real

or perceived.

3.(U) The Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MTA) has 1,178 staff members, of which 484 staff provincial offices and 694 work at Kabul headquarters. The two Deputy Ministers hold Finance and Administration and Tribal Affairs portfolios respectively. A new officer to handle Kuchi affairs has also been located in his ministry.

4.(U) Brahawi argued that tribes still matter in today's Afghanistan, though they are changing. In the past, people maintained connections with their tribes and families throughout the communist, civil war and Taliban eras. Today, he placed the main value of tribes in solving local disputes. He explained that tribal leaders and shuras (courts) are often quicker with resolving cases than the official court system, and Afghan traditional society is more accepting of those decisions. Brahawi noted that most Afghans still choose the traditional shura to court trials. He estimated that at least 80% of Afghans still consider their tribe important.

5.(SBU) The Minister spoke about the importance of tribal militias in providing security, and mentioned that his Ministry would like to obtain responsibility for these forces once again. He supported this desire by noting that tribal councils are meeting with greater frequency in areas where the security situation remains difficult along the borders with Pakistan. He said that the councils are asking the government (his Ministry) for funds

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to establish these forces. Brahawi said the councils are actively trying to assist the coalition by keeping information flowing and suggesting solutions to the problems tribal militias. He seemed disgruntled that when talk of hiring locals for security reasons is thrown about, it is usually the Ministry of Interior and not the MTA that is mentioned.

6.(SBU) Comment: Meetings with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs are always as interesting as they are predictable. Minister Brahawi argued that tribes and his Ministry are still important in Afghanistan, and just as in the previous two meetings (reftels), he spoke nostalgically about the days when the Ministry administered tribal militias. It is clear that he wants this responsibility back, but whether because the militias would actually be useful as he says, or whether it would simply provide him more resources is hard to say. The Embassy usually finds that other ministries involved in security or information gathering are more useful for understanding what is going on in Afghanistan than this one, though the local offices that meet with tribal councils could prove a good resource for State officers in PRTs.

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